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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC GROUP DENIES JOINING AL QAEDA

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

¶1. (SBU) Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG) ("Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah) officials have issued a denial of recent claims by Al Qaida's Ayman al Zawahiri that the EIG has joined Al Qaida. In a statement posted on the EIG's website (www.egyptianislamicgroup.com), the group "asserts the incorrectness" of Zawahiri's statement, noting that it "contains flagrant contradictions of reality" (full text of website statement below). On Egyptian and Arab satellite television programs aired on August 8, Karam Zuhdi, head of the EIG Shura Council, also denied that the EIG had joined Al Qaida, and reiterated points made in the below website statement.

¶2. (SBU) A translation of the EIG website statement follows:

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah asserts the incorrectness of the Al-Zawahiri statement that was broadcast on Al-Jazirah in regards to the joining of Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah to Al-Qa'ida organization, and denies the statement on the whole and in its details. As to the content of Al-Zawahiri's statement concerning the names of Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah leaders, it contains a flagrant contradiction of the reality:

-- Dr. Umar Abd-al-Rahman was and still is a strong supporter of Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah's initiative launched in ¶1997. To this date, he is still detained in an American prison. May God ease his agony and may God raise his standing.

-- Shaykh Abd-al-Akhir Hammad announced on Al-Jazirah that he in fact did not belong to the Al-Qa'ida organization on the whole and in its details.

-- As for Shaykh Rifa'i Taha, he has declared since August 1998 his withdrawal from the Global Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders. He declared afterwards his observance to Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah's decision. To this day, he is still detained in one of the Egyptian prisons where he has been since 2001. All that is known about him confirms his observance to Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah's current initiative.

-- Shaykh Muhammad Mustafa al-Murqi reinforced his support to the Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah initiative in his book regarding the sinful killing of civilians in the Islamic Shari'ah and whose content contradicts the Al-Qa'ida organization's stance regarding civilians.

-- We are left with brother Muhammad Khalil al-Hukayimah whose name appeared on the statement broadcasted by Al-Jazirah. The man is not known to us, and has never occupied a leadership position in Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah.

His association with the Al-Qa'ida organization represents his personal stand, no more and no less.

All that is left to say is that Al Jama'ah al-Islamiyah and the Al-Qa'ida organization are in a profound disagreement on the way they look at the reality, the goals they target, and the strategies they plan. Because of the disagreement, Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah appealed to the leaders of Al-Qa'ida in a number of writings to review its vision and to reserve the latent power of jihad in the souls of believers for use where there is an oppressive colonialist or occupier away from the bombing of Riyadh and Casablanca, and to review the strategy of confronting enemies and fighting the whole world.

Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah

Karam Zuhdi, Najih Ibrahim, Isam Darbalah, Usamah Hafiz, Fu'ad al-Duwalibi, Ali al-Sharif, Asim Abd-al-Majid, Hamdi Abd-al-Rahman

-- Expect Shaykh Abd-al-Akhir Hammad's declaration on Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah's website in which he refutes his joining Al-Qa'ida.

-- Await statements by Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah's leaders in regard to this erroneous news.

-- Await a few articles on the truth of the disagreement between the vision of Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah and the Al-Qa'ida organization.

End text of translation.

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